

2004 Summary Report of Accomplishments

Whatcom Conservation District



Natural Resource Improvements in 2004 –Summary

- *Water quality screening data gathered to support the Lower Nooksack Bacteria Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program continued to meet interim goals, supporting the conclusion that dairy farmers' efforts to implement nutrient management plans have contributed to a reduction in fecal coliform counts in five watersheds in the Lower Nooksack River basin.*
- *Whatcom County's Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program established 143.4 acres and 6.2 miles of new riparian buffer.*
- *The District was recognized along with other groups and agencies as instrumental in achieving documented reductions in agricultural sources of water pollution that effected the partial re-openings of shellfish beds in Portage Bay (October 2003) and Drayton Harbor (June 2004).*



Portage Bay, located in far western Bellingham Bay, was closed for tribal shellfish harvest in 1997. Whatcom County farmers' efforts to implement nutrient management plans helped to effect water quality improvements that resulted in an October 2003 upgrade of 625 acres of shellfish growing area.

Mission of Whatcom Conservation District :

- *Promotes conservation education and provides technical assistance to foster a healthy relationship between people and the environment.*

Water Quality Implementation

- *Provided technical assistance and coordination in support of a Bertrand Watershed Improvement District.*
- *Began coordination with drainage improvement districts to guide re-establishment of vegetated riparian corridors as part of a four-year grant in partnership with Whatcom County. District directed channel maintenance and re-vegetation efforts for 41,700 lineal feet of stream bank that included 33,450 plants during the 2003-04 planting season.*

Basic Funding

- *Provided support and natural resource educational materials to 1500 sixth grade students through participation in the annual Whatcom County 6th Grade Forest Conservation Tour.*
- *Upgraded and maintained the District's Information Technology systems and website to offer the best possible service to our cooperators, including electronic newsletters, sign-ups, and plant sale orders.*
- *Basic Funding allowed the District to pursue two other funding opportunities. The District was successful in obtaining a \$250,000 Centennial Clean Water Fund grant to implement Phase III of riparian restoration and water quality education programs in the Tenmile watershed.*

Local Funding

- *WCD does not receive funding from Whatcom County or local cities, nor do we have an assessment.*

Puget Sound/Water Quality

- *Partnered with Horses for Clean Water program and local experts to coordinate a series of spring 2004 small farm management workshops focusing on environmentally sensitive horse-keeping practices.*
- *Hosted a Small Farm Tour at a sheep farm to showcase examples of livestock BMPs in action. The tour included local agency and private sector experts. Over 80 local farm owners participated in the tour.*
- *Led 11 watershed education classes and five field experiences for various local schools. Over two hundred elementary and high school students benefited from classroom and field (tree planting, salmon hatchery tour, collecting water quality data) experience.*

Professional Engineering

- *Completed topographic and cross section survey of a mile of the Tenmile Creek valley in support of the plan to restore habitat functions along the creek.*
- *Surveyed and prepared permit applications to support agricultural drainage ditch maintenance for Whatcom Drainage Improvement District #7 (California Creek/Custer area).*
- *Provided survey and technical assistance to Lummi log jam project on the South Fork Nooksack.*

Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program

- Completed 27 new riparian planting projects in the past year with over 20 future projects planned.
- Established 143.4 acres and 6.2 miles of new riparian buffer.
- As of June 2004, a total of 107 implemented CREP projects have improved 1,168 acres and 67.7 miles of riparian fish and wildlife habitat.
- Revised and distributed basic version of Whatcom CREP database to all state CREP districts. With reports generated from this effort, the District provided Washington State Conservation Commission accurate financial projections for next three years, thus enabling procurement of additional adequate funds from the legislature to implement fall 2004 project planting.

Dairy

- Certified 84 Dairy Nutrient Management Plans.
- Completed 107 federal and 57 state costshare contract status reviews.
- Worked with NRCS staff to rank 135 producers who applied for 2004 Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) costshare funding. Contracts totaling \$837,096 were awarded in Whatcom County for 2004 federal EQIP funding.

Watershed Conservation/Habitat Restoration

- Encouraged cross-border watershed cooperation by hosting a meeting and a tour of Bertrand Creek watershed to facilitate information exchange between U.S. and Canadian sides of the watershed. The meeting included 6 resource professionals from Canadian agencies and organizations and 18 professionals involved in the Comprehensive Irrigation District Management Plan (CIDMP) process from the U.S. side.
- Administered the CCWF Tenmile Watershed Pilot Project grant, a sub-watershed based project to educate local residents and to restore and maintain at least 12,000 linear feet of riparian habitat.
- Administered a US Fish & Wildlife Service Aquatic On-the-Ground cooperative agreement enabling Nooksack Salmon Enhancement Association to provide maintenance to existing plantings, to establish native vegetation along 8000 feet of riparian area, and restore stream complexity by introducing large woody debris the Tenmile watershed.

Small Farm Program

- Developed conservation plans (CPs) incorporating BMPs (composting systems, fencing, use exclusions, nutrient management, filter strips, pasture management, etc.) to protect water quality for small livestock operations including horses, sheep, beef cattle, llamas, goats, and chickens.
- Coordinated fall 2003 tour of a Demonstration Farm in Terrell watershed for over 80 participants to showcase livestock best management practices.
- Coordinated a spring 2004 five-class series of Horses for Clean Water workshops.

Information & Education

- Processed 321 orders for over 23,900 trees and shrubs during the District's 11th Annual Plant Sale.
- Led watershed education and restoration efforts in Bertrand and Fishtrap Creek watersheds, including planting events, a hatchery tour, and collaboration with Bertrand Watershed Improvement District efforts.
- Maintained communication with local cooperators through newsletter publications: two issues of Whatcom Conservation News (distribution list of 2000+ countywide) and four issues of In Balance (distribution list of 250+ local dairy industry recipients). Provided technical assistance to publication of three issues of Tenmile Treasures (distribution list of 300+ to residents of Tenmile Creek Watershed who own property along the creek).
- Maintained an educational display at various community events to provide watershed information and to encourage participation in District programs.



District staff led this kindergarten class in learning about watershed concepts.